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IMPROVED INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO OUR COALITION PARTNERS AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL.

Steve 1	Manning
LtCol	. USMC

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College of the Department of Navy.

09 May 2004

"Intelligence support to our Coalition partners during OIF was broken; we have to do a better job of providing support..." Post-OIF comment made by a general officer to the students of NWC in March 2004.

Based on an overwhelming number of intelligence After Action Remarks (AARs) from Operation Iraqi Freedom, ¹ it is clear that the Combatant Commands (COCOMs) need to improve their ability to provide intelligence products and information to coalition partners at the theater level. Intelligence sharing between our coalition partners has been hampered by a lack of connectivity with regard to dissemination ² in a coalition environment, production of products at the U.S.-only level, and policies that limit the COCOM's ability to disclose or release information to coalition partners in a timely fashion. It is my contention that without an improvement in all three areas mentioned above, true interoperability at the operational level with our coalition partners will never be achieved from an intelligence perspective. And while a marked improvement in any one area would be viewed as a plus from a dissemination viewpoint, without a drastic improvement across the full spectrum of issues listed above, mutually supporting intelligence in a coalition environment will remain hampered.

The issue of intelligence sharing at the operational level is critical to the COCOM Commander due to our stated policy of fighting as a coalition and our ability to mutually support one another through intelligence sharing. The lack of responsive dissemination

¹ Comment from JFCOM during AAR brief to NWC in March 2004, JULLS database pulls, AAR comments on JFCOM home page concerning OIF. Vietnam/Bosnia operations research and e-mail feedback from current COCOM FDOs, intelligence producers, managers, and planners.

² Dissemination: The conveyance of intelligence in suitable form to agencies needing it, DIAM 59-1.

protocol impacts the commander's ability to engage with coalition intelligence members; reduces our access and ability to leverage coalition intelligence products; and hampers our effectiveness working in a coalition environment. Current procedures, connectivity and collection/production methods do not support our ability to work in a combined intelligence environment. Historical examples in this paper will support my claim that in order to succeed with regard to dissemination of intelligence in a coalition environment the COCOM needs to be able to leverage policies to support intelligence sharing; streamline production of intelligence products at the releasable level; and disseminate this information on a robust coalition-wide communications architecture. As a conclusion to this paper I will outline a formula that, if implemented, will mitigate these shortfalls. Additionally, I will provide a counterargument that addresses major concerns with regard to sharing of intelligence products in coalition environment.

The policies surrounding dissemination of classified military information to foreign governments and organizations are grounded in the Non Disclosure

Publication-1.³ This document is the "Rosetta Stone" that outlines specifically all foreign disclosure and releasablity requirements needed to disseminate classified intelligence in a coalition environment. As such, the document is both thorough and adequate, providing the COCOM foreign dissemination officer (FDO) clear guidance and procedures for the processing of requests to disseminate and disclose information to all non-cleared personnel. At the COCOM level the J2 (Senior Intelligence Officer) is responsible for ensuring that intelligence products are readily available to the Joint Forces Commander

³ Joint Pub 2.0, <u>Doctrine for Intelligence Support to Joint Operations</u>, Washington, D.C. 9 March 2000, Appendix B, Reference 4. p. B-1.

and other members of the joint force in a "timely" manner. ⁴ The J2 delegates this function to the FDO who acts as the J2's representative for all foreign disclosure matters. Due to the volume of requests and the complexity involved relating to foreign disclosure, the FDO, at the operational level, is neither sufficiently manned nor staffed with the requisite expertise to accomplish this function in a "timely manner." When you consider the rapidity of planning, deployment, and execution of operations, and the compressed decision-making cycle in regard to the complexity/process of downgrading strategic intelligence at the operational level, timely dissemination of intelligence products to our coalition partners is critical towards achieving success on the battlefield. While there are plenty of examples where the FDO facilitates this process during peacetime, the overwhelming response from joint, combined, and component-level intelligence staffs is that in order to facilitate the processing of information sharing in a timely manner, either the policies for disclosure must be changed; the FDO function at the operational level must be made more robust with the capability to downgrade information at the front end; or the national agencies must produce information at the releasable level, not U.S.-only.⁵

Historically, Combatant Commands have had a mixed record with regard to timely dissemination of intelligence to coalition partners. Examples of intelligence sharing listed below highlight both the successes and the failures in the process of sharing intelligence at the operational level, and support the theme that intelligence support in a coalition environment is broken. Examples from the Vietnam War, military operations in

⁴ Joint Pub 2.0, p. III-II (Comment: Timely matter as it relates to the dissemination requirement and sensitivity of the intelligence request.)

⁵ Comment: various responses on this subject from: PACOM FDO, JAC Molesworth FDO, IIIMEF FDO, IMEF Combined Intelligence Center OIC during OIF, U.S. Liaison Officer to UK Joint HQ, London, EUCOM FDO. These individuals represent a broad agreement that the mechanism for dissemination of intelligence to our coalition partners is not "timely" and negatively impacts intelligence operations at the operational level when working in a coalition environment.

Bosnia (1995–present), and most recently during OIF in the Middle East, support my claim that successful intelligence sharing must incorporate policy changes, communication architecture improvements, and production at a releaseable level. These military actions are unique because they: reflect dissemination and disclosure of intelligence in a coalition environment at the operational level; are prior to the establishment of the NDP-1 (Vietnam War); provide a post-Cold War view (JTF Provide Promise in Yugoslavia.) The most recent operational-level war (OIF) in the Middle East proves that, even with proper coalition dissemination procedures, if the communication pipe remains broken or nonexistent at the distant end, and the procedures for dissemination are not flexible enough to support rapid operations, then the end result will be an ineffective intelligence-sharing process. These three examples will demonstrate that, as we become more reliant on national-level intelligence capabilities versus theater systems and conduct operations with frighteningly fast efficiency, the procedures to disseminate intelligence to our coalition partners become more complex and challenged, especially with regard to the term "timely."

Our ability to provide intelligence products in a coalition environment can be viewed during the Vietnam War with a mixed record of accomplishment. The length of our involvement in the war (1962–1973), and the contributions our coalition partners provided to the intelligence process, impacted intelligence efforts both positively and negatively. Limitations in Vietnam from an intelligence perspective centered on the dichotomy of abilities between South Vietnamese and U.S. military capabilities. The American intelligence strengths centered on intelligence systems for collection, expansive communications capabilities to move information in theater, and funding to

meet any operational requirement. The Vietnamese support to intelligence operations during the conflict centered on language, cultural mastery, and knowledge of the North Vietnamese military/Viet Cong insurgency. These differences outlined in the Vietnam experience are similar to every operation conducted at the operational level in a coalition setting since the close of that war, and they remain relevant today. While the Vietnam War is culturally viewed as a losing effort, the combined intelligence support provided as a coalition can be viewed as both positive and mutually supporting. Through an extensive use of "joint agreements" signed at the COCOM level, the facilitation of intelligence sharing went from nonexistent early in the campaign to robust in nature by 1967–1968. The level of cooperation between allied forces was highlighted by a responsive use of "go-teams" composed of both U.S. and Vietnamese intelligence experts. In addition, the use of multiple combined intelligence centers manned equally by U.S. and Vietnamese under a combined command provided a balanced intelligence picture leveraging both U.S. and Viet strengths. The impact of this arrangement has been lost on present planners due to the perception of its "ineffectiveness" in a losing cause. Inherent weaknesses in the Vietnam model can be seen clearly in the length of time required to develop interoperability between intelligence forces. In the case of combined intelligence teams and combined intelligence centers, five years passed before the effectiveness of these organizations could come to fruition. In addition, strategic security regulations and cultural bias on both U.S. and host-nation intelligence practices precluded the speedy integration of intelligence sharing and dissemination early in the war. Despite these drawbacks, in time, our ability to provide and disseminate intelligence products at the

 ⁶ Col. Lung, <u>Intelligence</u>, U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C. p. 80. (Unclassified)
 ⁷ Lung, p. 82.

operational level was robust and positive. Connectivity shortfalls were mitigated by the use of courier, radio, and land line communications. Production of intelligence products was accomplished by combined intelligence teams and staffs and intelligence centers. Joint/Combined doctrine was established, and agreements were drawn up to facilitate the sharing of information. Production of information was provided at the releasable level to both U.S. and Vietnamese coalition partners and was provided in English and Vietnamese. Additionally, because the current NDP guidelines were not in effect in 1968, and because the majority of strategic intelligence capabilities were focused toward supporting national-level leaders versus support to COCOMs, the sensitivity and dissemination process was less restrictive. This is a critical point, because without the use of strategic intelligence systems, the COCOM commander during this time relied on theater and component assets for intelligence support. Because the majority of operational intelligence production was focused in theater, the COCOM's ability to produce, disseminate, and disclose intelligence could be timely and controlled to meet the needs of the intelligence consumer in theater. The lesson here is that intelligence derived at the operational and tactical level allows for a more "timely" response to intelligence sharing amongst coalition partners at the operational level. Only with the advent of centralized (in side the beltway) intelligence centers providing strategic-level intelligence to the COCOM, does the operational commander encounter complex problems with both disclosing and disseminating information to our coalition partners, because the procedures designed to safeguard national-level products are more restrictive than those involving theater/tactical systems at the operational level. Additionally, the approval

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⁸ Lung, p. 83.

process to get a national-level product released is more time-consuming due to the multiple layers of bureaucracy resident outside the COCOM intelligence apparatus.

Twenty years later, the most significant military intelligence event at the operational level occurred during Operation Provide Promise/Joint Endeavor in the former Republic of Yugoslavia (1995–present). This multinational operation brought together the majority of NATO partners and non-NATO countries including former Soviet Warsaw Pact members, in an effort to provide peace enforcement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As such, intelligence support in this environment was challenging because of a number of critical issues, including a non-U.S.-led command structure and its impact on intelligence operations and focus, and a lack of coherent intelligence doctrine to work outside of NATO parameters. Dissemination of intelligence information with regard to communications connectivity, and combined production of intelligence products releasable to coalition partners were all factors that affected intelligence support to our coalition partners during this operation. These challenges were in some ways similar to those encountered during the Vietnam War, but were more complex due to the mission (peace making/enforcement versus combat) and the multitude of coalition partners. In the face of these challenges, U.S.-led intelligence planners developed a clear set of plans and priorities to offset the problems encountered. These included the establishment of "national intelligence support teams/joint field intelligence teams". at both the operational and task force level. During operations in Bosnia, the strategic intelligence organizations (DIA,CIA, NSA) organized and provided to the both the U.S. COCOM in

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⁹ Melissa Patrick, USA <u>Intelligence in Support of Peace Operations: The Story of Task Force Eagle and Operation Joint Endeavor</u>, Army War College, 10 April 2000, p. 2. (Unclassified)
¹⁰ Patrick, p. 13.

Italy (AFSOUTH)¹¹ and the Allied Rapid Reaction Command (ARRC)¹² numerous robust combined intelligence centers capable of fusing various multinational products into one coherent intelligence picture. ¹³ At the operational level, U.S. military Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) was based on FM-34-130 Army IPB manual and the Joint Pub 2-0. These documents provided COCOM intelligence planners/analysts the foundation and guidance for intelligence support that eventually developed, taking into account geopolitical considerations effecting operations; arms control activity; political elections of the various warring factions; war crimes prosecution; support to non-NATO members including the Russian Battalion; and NGO activity. The task of coordinating and disseminating information provided a daunting challenge to the intelligence community, but was accomplished via centralized intelligence planning at both the AFSOUTH command and ARRC/C2, and decentralized execution (by the various coalition intelligence organizations) to fulfill the numerous intelligence requests for information (RFIs) levied upon the intelligence community by all the coalition members.

To further improve our capacity to disseminate information to our coalition partners, both the strategic and theater-level intelligence centers tailored their products and classified them at the U.S./Rel NATO/IFOR¹⁴ level. Communications connectivity was uneven amongst coalition partners but was facilitated by the robust U.S.

¹¹ Admiral Smith, AFSOUTH Commander located in Naples, Italy

¹² Comment: Allied Rapid Reaction Command (ARRC) had an umbrella organization composed of numerous national intelligence organizations that include US National Intelligence Center (NIC), Canada NIC, German NIC, Danish NIC, French NIC, Italian NIC, and UK intelligence element.

¹³ Comment: despite having Coalition intelligence products available, U.S. leaders were never without US-only information and information not releasable to coalition partners.

¹⁴ U.S./Rel NATO/IFOR is a classification marking allowing for the dissemination/release of U.S. intelligence products to both U.S. personnel, NATO and IFOR (implementation force) personnel cleared for such information.

communications architecture that was capable of moving vast amounts of information via satellite, microwave, land line, and courier means. While coalition partners did not have access to U.S.-only communications systems, they managed to provide timely communication support via single channel satcom, land line, HF frequency, and courier methods. Coalition limitations (when compared to U.S. capabilities) were offset by the general centralized location of the AOR in proximity to their higher headquarters in Europe and by the fact that the majority of production that flowed over U.S. communications systems was produced at a level releasable to coalition partners. While there were limitations in this umbrella organization that included an uneven connectivity at the operational level, validity of information from the U.S. perspective, and security of personnel involved (Russian Battalion), the overall effect was both positive and timely to both U.S./Coalition members. Security considerations (from a U.S. perspective) were minimized based on the overwhelming production of intelligence products releasable to the coalition from the onset of operations. Additionally, U.S. intelligence centers in country were augmented by national intelligence support teams that could validate, provide "tear-line", 15 reporting for those U.S.-only intelligence products that were required to support coalition missions. Having the ability to downgrade U.S.-only information at the front end (in Sarajevo and Bosnia) reduced the chances of compromise of critical information, allowed U.S. intelligence personnel to work more effectively in a coalition setting, and allowed for the sharing of information among coalition partners in a "timely manner."

¹⁵ Comment: "Tear Line" reporting is a technique that provides both U.S.-only information and a synopsis of information that could be disseminated to coalition partners without comprising U.S. sources and methods. This procedure of "tear line" reporting was used by every coalition partner and was SOP for securing each country's intelligence operations.

Drawbacks noted during operations in Bosnia were many, but mainly centered around a lack of common intelligence doctrine and methodology among all coalition partners. There was no single source agreement overseeing the conduct and execution of intelligence operations as that which existed during the Vietnam conflict. Many of the coalition countries had no dedicated intelligence personnel, ¹⁶ and coalition intelligence planning below the ARRC/C2 level was not centralized, thus impacting the effectiveness and focus of the intelligence effort throughout the various sectors in Bosnia. Finally, the establishment and utilization of joint and combined communication architecture was neither present nor used during this conflict. The impact of this last issue was minimized due to adequate internal communications of our primary allies, but was seen as a major limitation during OIF ten years later. The intelligence effort in Bosnia was viewed as a success despite these drawbacks. The overall success of the intelligence effort was due to the three-year "ramp up" that intelligence organizations had prior to the execution of the mission in December of 1995. 17 At issue were the proximity of the main area of operations to our coalition partners' strategic intelligence centers and host nation connectivity, and the uniqueness of the mission in relation to post-Cold War concerns as to how NATO was going to operate after the fall of the Soviet Union. Additionally, the use of tactical collection assets (Predator, U2, EP-3, ground based, and coalition assets, etc.) all supported the dissemination process and provided the FDO both in and out of country a detailed intelligence library of information/collection platforms to collect, produce, and disseminate information at the operational level. Bosnia was a success despite policy limitations with regard to intelligence operations. The U.S. carried the load

 $^{^{16}}$ Patrick, p. 26. 17 JTF-PP transition into JTF-JE at that time.

with regard to dissemination to all coalition members, the mission was static in nature, and the lead-up time was substantial. As we will see during our discussion of OIF, the nature of the mission, area of operations, and execution of the operation will all impact dissemination and disclosure of intelligence to our coalition partners and challenge the notion that we are prepared to conduct intelligence operations in a coalition environment.

The fallout over U.S. intelligence support to coalition operations during OIF is centered on the continued use of U.S.-only information systems, the lack of coalition dissemination architecture, under-utilization of commercial assets, and the impact that speed and success on the battlefield had with regard to the existing dissemination procedures.

The comment on the opening page of this paper is damning considering the scope and history of the U.S. working with the British¹⁸ prior to operations in Iraq. Combined training, manning of critical intelligence billets¹⁹ in both countries, and operational execution in Bosnia and Kosovo, and in support of the no fly zones in Iraq prior to the conflict all support interoperability with the British military.²⁰ So what was the problem? From the British perspective the problem of intelligence sharing with regard to OIF centered on U.S. intelligence personnel utilizing "U.S.-only systems" for the majority of their planning and execution of operations²¹ and the continued practice of "over classification of U.S. intelligence products clearly destined for coalition dissemination

¹⁸ British expeditionary force was our main coalition partner during the conflict.

¹⁹ Langen-Smith, Leah <leah.Langen@jac.eucom.smil.mil> to Manning, Steven <steven.manning@nwc.navy.smil.mil> 13 April 2004, (Comment: Unclassified content to an e-mail questionnaire.)

²⁰ Patrick, p.24-28

²¹ Combat Assessment Team, USMC AAR comments, Coalition Intelligence issues.

<www.mccdc.usmc.mil/CEAB/AUG%2003%20CEAB_files/Briefs/26>

and planning."²² Despite this shortfall in commonality with regard to connectivity. ²³ the intelligence picture prior to the war was fairly accurate, but due to the rapid pace and achievement demonstrated during the opening weeks of the conflict, the intelligence system failed to keep pace with actions on the ground from a dissemination viewpoint with our coalition partners. The question needs to be asked, "Did current dissemination policies support our efforts in a coalition environment during OIF?" The answer is twofold. AAR comments after OIF reflect that interoperability between British and U.S. intelligence planners provided access to planning data and targeting information was accomplished.²⁴ But that reflections from the U.S. LNO at the joint HQ in London articulated the lack of access to U.S. systems and products and the inordinate amount of time required to get those products through the dissemination process in Washington, D.C.²⁵ But additional comments note that, once operations commenced, the lack of organic British communications architecture hampered their ability to disseminate intelligence information internal to their forces in theater. ²⁶ The importance of this is that no matter how well you plan leading up to a conflict, not having the necessary tools to disseminate information limits the effectiveness of all prior planning. Unlike operations in Bosnia and Vietnam, U.S. intelligence dissemination policy and production worked fairly well during the conflict in OIF, but a serious lack of common communications

²² Langen-Smith

²³ Global Securiy <u>First Reflections</u>, "Operations in

Iraq"<www.global.security.org/military/library/report/2003/iraq-ops_1st-ref_ukmod_july03_chapter2.htm> on 15 August 2004. Comment: AAR comments noted working in a coalition environment.

²⁴ Global Security, p.2.6

²⁵ Langen-Smith

²⁶ OIC, Combined Intelligence Center, IMEF, unclassified phone conversation on 11 April 2004. Comment: British relied on curriers, radio and single channel satcom to move the bulk of intelligence products, the lack of British ability to move information electronically was slower and less effective than during Gulf War I.

architecture and limited allied communications capability seriously hampered the dissemination of intelligence products to the end user.

As seen in all three case studies, to achieve interoperability and successful intelligence dissemination with our coalition partners, three parameters must be accomplished:

- 1) establishment of a combined communications architecture to facilitate dissemination of intelligence products;
- 2) policies must be written to effect dissemination between coalition partners; and
- 3) intelligence products must be produced and be releasable to our coalition partners.

In the case of Vietnam all three parameters were present for success, but the process took years to develop into a combined intelligence organization. In Bosnia, all three parameters were present, but dissemination of intelligence was only achieved due to the long lead time, static nature of the conflict, and proximity of the AOR to coalition HQs and fixed communication infrastructure in Europe. In OIF, prior coordination and policies were formulated, but difficulties with regard to access to U.S. communication systems, the lengthy process of downgrading intelligence products in relationship to dissemination, and the compressed planning time line hampered interoperability efforts between the U.S. and Britain. Concurrently, once hostilities commenced during OIF, the communications architecture supporting our coalition partners was inadequate to meet the task of intelligence dissemination.

Clearly, without the ability to downgrade classified information in a timely manner, the FDO at the operational level will be hampered in providing critical information to our coalition partners. My belief is that current policies are effective in

providing security with regard to both U.S. intelligence capabilities and accidental disclosure of information. The requirement to improve information sharing must not focus on the rules (NDP-1) designed to safeguard U.S. national level capabilities. Instead the focus of intelligence support to our coalition partners at the operational level must change to include the use of regional/theater/tactical intelligence collection capabilities; the use of commercial intelligence applications;²⁷ the establishment of permanently manned combined intelligence centers as demonstrated during both in Vietnam and Bosnia; the establishment and funding of a robust coalition communications architecture designed for tactical operations, deployable and compatible with U.S. systems; and the lifting of restrictions with regard to our traditional allies²⁸ having accesses to U.S.-only systems. These ideas, while taking time and money to accomplish, will also require a generational view that must occur within the intelligence community at the COCOM level in order to facilitate working in a coalition environment. In the short term, in order to support the COCOM FDO, I would recommend an immediate increase of qualified personnel with corresponding skills to ensure that the downgrading of classified information is carried out in the most expeditious manner possible.²⁹ As an example, I would require a national intelligence representative (DIA, CIA, NSA) to be available to the COCOM/J2 for this specific purpose. In some cases this model has been adopted, but unfortunately, based on input from the various intelligence leaders at the COCOM level,³⁰ uniformity of personnel staffing is not consistent and is too often driven by current engagement/op-tempo/crisis events versus long-term management of the problem.

²⁷ Comment: Commercial systems to include satellite imaging, communications, civilian law enforcement products, contracted intelligence analysis. All of these capabilities are available today!

⁸ Comment: British, Australians, New Zealand, Canada.

²⁹ Hall, Ron, e-mail.

Adopting the above-mentioned ideas would positively impact intelligence dissemination from a operational view in relation to coalition support because they require less in the way of information security, can be tailored at the COCOM level, and ultimately provide a level of information to the COCOM and Coalition partners that is responsive. Without the adoption of these ideas, and given the manner in which we conduct warfare today, continued lack of interoperability with our historic and emerging coalition partners will remain unchanged.

A counterargument to this proposal is that the cost, complexity, and security of U.S. intelligence products and capabilities will be compromised and that the security of foreign intelligence personnel can never truly be verified. My counter to this type of feedback is that we need to focus at the operational level and get away from the thinking on the National/Strategic level with regard to the conduct of operational level intelligence operations. The majority of intelligence information at the COCOM level is geared toward regional issues versus strategic/national level use, and the concern for safeguarding U.S. capabilities, while no less important, is not the same. The execution of planning, timelines, and speed of operations at the COCOM level are such that current dissemination practices are not capable of supporting coalition operations in a "timely manner," and that concerns over security and cost, while valid, do nothing to enhance our ability to work in a coalition environment. Additionally, the costs of not investing in this arena is a further reduction/leveraging of coalition intelligence support, and the wasted

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³⁰ Comment: Consistent comment from PACOM/EUCOM/COMPONENT intelligence professionals. ³¹ In fact dissemination/disclosure and releasability of classified intelligence are govern'd the same, but information derived thru tactical, regional, commercial means can be geared much more effectively with regard to release ability and disclosure at the COCOM level. Avoiding the difficulties with competing priorities, timeliness present when having to go back to the "Beltway" for approval to release national intelligence products.

time required reengineering the current procedures, communication pipes and production methods that exist today.

In conclusion, the requirement to improve our intelligence sharing within a coalition context is well documented today, as well as in the past.³² The capability to share classified intelligence with our coalition partners requires that we tackle the problem from three fronts including

- 1) establishing the agreements, policies, and memorandums with our coalition partners that allow for the mutual sharing of intelligence;
- 2) ensuring that our COCOM organic and national level intelligence production centers produce information at the appropriately releasable level. To facilitate production needed in a coalition environment, information should be collected with regional, theater, and tactical collection assets, thus affording the COCOM/G2 and his theater joint intelligence centers the ability to quickly generate products that can be tailored and releasable; and
- 3) investing in a coalition communications architecture that is both deployable and responsive to fast-changing operational conditions. The adoption of these ideas will further the COCOM's ability to become interoperable with both traditional and emerging coalition partners. Without improvements in these areas and with the current over-reliance on national-level intelligence, the gulf between coalition intelligence capabilities and our own will only widen, resulting in a continued lack of responsiveness with regard to "timely" intelligence support.

³² See Bibliography, E-mail, JULLS data bases.

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DeSomer Frank <desomerf@iiimef.usmc.smil.mil > "Coalition Intelligence" [steven.manning@nwc.navy.smil.mil] 09 April 2004

Fellows, Scott < scott.fellows@jac.eucom.smil.mil > "Coalition Intelligence" [steven.manning@nwc.navy.smil.mil] 14 April 2004

Gentile, Philip < gentilepd@iimef.usmc.mil > "Coalition Intelligence" [steven.manning@nwc.navy.smil.mil] 13 April 2004

Hall, Ron < hallr@pacom.smil.mil> "Coalition Intelligence" [steven.manning@nwc.navy.smil.mil] 11 April 2004

Redding, Michael < michael.redding@Jac.eucom.smil.mil > "Coalition Intelligence" [steven.manning@nwc.navy.smil.mil] 14 April 2004

Sheltz, Scott C < scott.sheltz@JAC. EUCOM.SMIL.MIL> "Coalition Intelligence" [steven.manning@nwc.navy.smil.mil] 14 April 2004

Van Sciver, James < james.vanSciver@jac.eucom.smil.mil > "Coalition Intelligence" [steven.manning@nwc.navy.smil.mil] 14 April 2004

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